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ABSTRACT

The booklet, one of a series of guides for parents of deaf-blind children developed by Project STEPS (Steps Toward Effective Production of Speech), gives parents practical suggestions for caring for their deaf-blind child's hearing aid. An initial section provides basic information on hearing aid function and care. Specific care ideas are provided for the aid's earmolds and batteries. Parents are advised about tasks to perform everyday (inspect it, listen to it, check the volume and tone, set it at the correct volume, and take it off properly). Troubleshooting suggestions are offered regarding such problems as no sound, whistling or feedback, noise, unclear speech, and too soft speech. The booklet concludes with illustrations and descriptions of special hearing aids. (CL)

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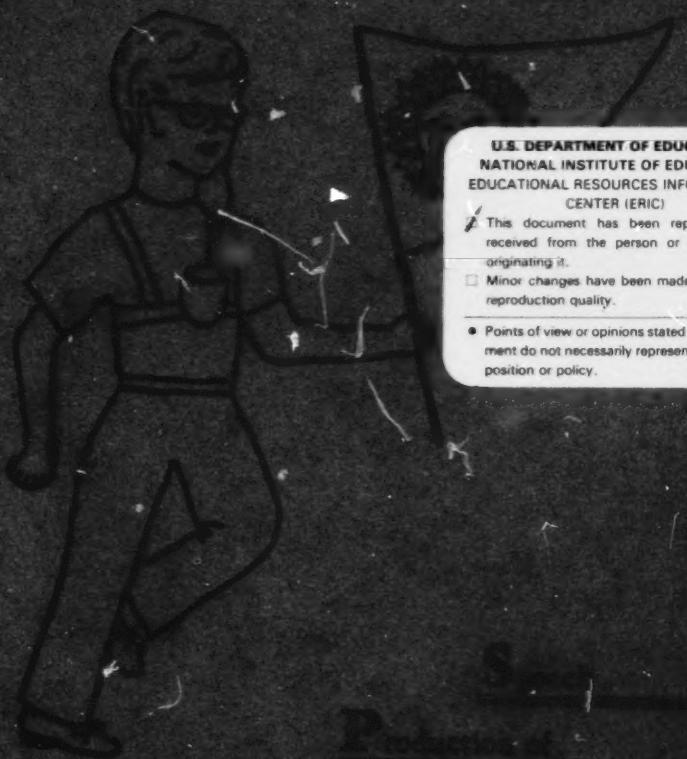

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Steps Toward Effective Production of Speech (STEPS) A Set of Booklets for Parents of Deaf-Blind Children

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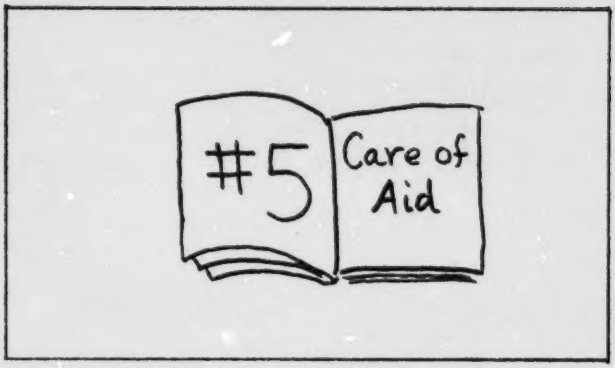
The University of Alabama—
Department of
Communicative Disorders
Area of Special Education
Partlow State School and Hospital
1983



ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

Parents often have questions about caring for their child's hearing aids. This booklet will answer some of your questions.

Most deaf-blind children need to wear their hearing aids every day. This is why the aids need to be checked every day. Look at your child's aids each time before you put them on him. Listen to how each aid sounds.

Be sure to read THINGS TO DO EVERY DAY. It starts on page 11. Follow the booklet as you make your daily checks.

Sometimes a hearing aid does not work right. For example, a hearing aid may be dead. If so, look at page 3 under PROBLEMS. There you will see "No Sound .....32." Turn to page 32 and read what to do when there is no sound from a hearing aid.

Have a special place for your child's hearing aids. It needs to be in a safe place like a drawer. Keep the aids there when your child is not wearing them.

Put this booklet with the aids. Then you can find it when you need it.

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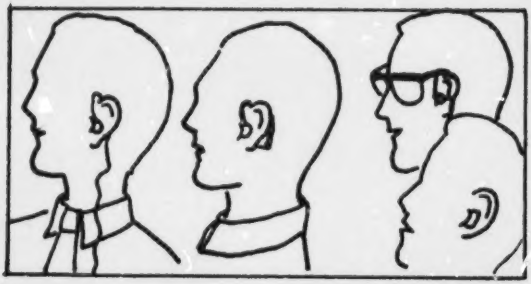


HEARING AIDS

There are four main kinds of hearing aids. One kind, called a body aid, is worn on the chest. The other three kinds are worn on the head. They are the behind-the-ear aid, the in-the-ear aid, and the eyeglass aid. There is a drawing of each kind on the last page and inside the back cover of this booklet.

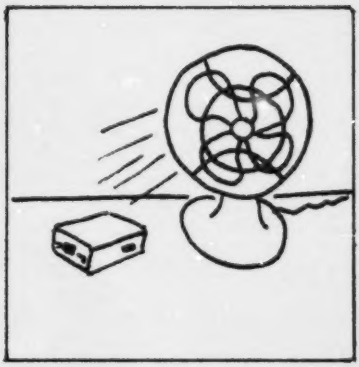
Hearing aids need special care because they break easily. And it costs a lot to fix or replace a broken aid. Some things that can

hurt an aid are dropping it, getting it wet, and getting it near X rays.

☐ A hearing aid can be hurt by a sharp blow such as dropping or hitting it. It should be worn so that it will not fall off. Sometimes you need to take it off to protect it. Take it off and put it in a safe place before rough play.

☐ Anything that gets inside a hearing aid can hurt it. Try to keep dust, hair spray, and food out of the aid. Also protect the aid from drool, sweat, and water.

If a hearing aid gets soaking wet, put it someplace to dry. Put it where it is a little warm. But do not heat it or put it in a hot place. In the picture on the next page, a fan is helping to dry a wet aid.



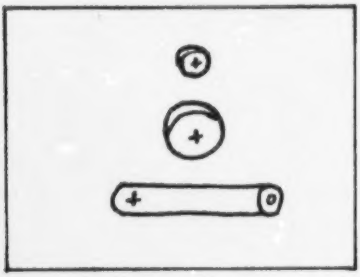
You may help to keep an aid dry with a plastic bag and some silica gel. These are crystals that soak up water from the air. Once a week, put the hearing aid in the bag with the crystals over night.

After a while the crystals turn color and cannot soak up any more water. Put them in a warm oven to dry them. After they have dried, they can soak up water again.

□ X rays can hurt a hearing aid. So, do not let an aid get close to them. If it does, the aid may

become noisy. Then it must be repaired.

An electric eye may also make a hearing aid noisy. An electric eye is sometimes used to open a door. When a person moves close to the door, the electric eye opens it. (A door that opens when you step on a mat will not hurt an aid.)



BATTERIES

A battery gives a hearing aid the power to make sound louder. There are different kinds of bat-

teries. Those that are the same size are not always the same. The person who sold the hearing aid can tell you which batteries to use.

Have batteries tested before you buy them if you can. Buy enough to last six or eight weeks. A new battery will keep its power for quite a while. But it will get weak if you keep it a long time before using it.

All batteries become weak after they are used for a while. Some are thrown away when they get weak. Others can be recharged like the battery in a car. Batteries that can be recharged can cost less in the long run. Ask the person who sold the aid which battery to use.

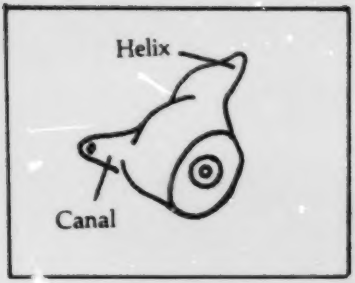
When the battery gets weak, the sound from the hearing aid

gets soft. A battery tester can tell you when a battery is too weak to use. Page 22 tells you how to use a battery tester.

The person who sold the aid can tell you how long a battery will last. He can also tell you what to do if the aid begins to use batteries too fast.

Throw away a battery if it is leaking. The acid that leaks out may damage the hearing aid.

Keep your batteries in a cool dry place. They do not need to be kept in the refrigerator. But if you decide to keep them in the refrigerator, wrap them tightly in plastic. When you take them out of the refrigerator, let them warm up before you unwrap them. This keeps dampness from getting inside the batteries.



EARMOLDS

An earmold is a piece of plastic made to fit a person's ear. There is a drawing of an earmold above.

The mold carries sound from the hearing aid into the ear. You need to check each day to make sure your child's molds are clean. Pages 14 to 16 tell how to clean a mold.

Parents need to check a child's mold for cracks and rough spots. Page 16 tells what to do about these.

THINGS TO DO EVERY DAY

A child's hearing aids need to be checked at least once a day. This includes checking batteries and earmolds.

Check each aid before you put it on your child in the morning. You may want to make a chart like the one on the next page. Then, on Sunday after you do the five things, mark the five boxes under "SUN." Do the same on Monday and so on.

NOTE: Once a year a hearing aid should have an electronic check. This is done with a special machine. It tells if there is a problem that you can not see or hear. Take the aid for an electronic check to your audiologist or the person who sold it.

DAY-BY-DAY CHECK OF HEARING AID AND GLASSES

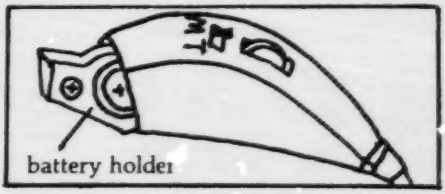
THINGS TO CHECK AND DO	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
1. Look at hearing aid (test battery, clean earmold)							
2. Listen to hearing aid							
3. Put on hearing aid							
4. Look at glasses (wash lenses)							
5. Put on glasses							

LOOK AT THE HEARING AID

Check a hearing aid each day by looking it over. Look at these things.

☐ CASE

The case should not be cracked or broken. If the case is broken it can be replaced. Take it to the person who sold it.



The battery holder (or cover) should open easily and close tightly. If it is broken, ask the person who sold the aid about fixing it.

Body Hearing Aid. The clothing clip should be in place and it should be tight. If it is lost,

you should get a new one.

Behind-the-Ear Hearing Aid. The ear hook should fit tightly to the case of the hearing aid. If it is loose, it should be replaced.

☐ EARMOLD

Body Hearing Aid. If the hole in the earmold is filled with earwax, take it out. First take the receiver off the earmold. Then push a pipe cleaner through the opening in the mold. You will have to wiggle the pipe cleaner a little because the holes curves. The picture below shows how to push wax out of the mold.

Ear-level Hearing Aid. If the hole in the earmold is filled with earwax, take it out. Use the point of a pin to dig the wax out. Be careful not to push the wax in farther. Also, be careful not to dig the pin point into the earmold itself.

The tube on the earmold should not be stiff. One end should fit tightly on the earhook. The other end should fit tightly in the earmold.

The tube should not have a crack or a hole in it. If the tube is not all right, ask the person who made the mold to replace the tube.

All Hearing Aids. See if the earmold is clean. If not, wash the mold. First, take the earmold off the hearing aid. Now, wash it in

warm water with a mild soap like Ivory.

Next, rinse off the soap with clear water. Then, shake the water out of the hole in the earmold.

Blow through the opening in the mold. This will get the rest of the water out. Now dry the mold.

See if the earmold is cracked. The two places likely to crack are the helix tip and the canal. If the canal is cracked and loose, pull the cracked end off. This will keep it from coming off in your child's ear. Smooth the rough edge of the canal before putting the mold on. You can smooth it with a nail file or fine sandpaper.

☐ BATTERY

See if the battery looks all right. The top and bottom should be

clean. If not, clean the dirty part with a nail file or fine sandpaper. Or you can use an emery board or a typewriter eraser.

If the battery is leaking, throw it away. The acid could damage the hearing aid.

☐ BATTERY CONTACTS

The battery contacts are metal parts inside the aid. They press against the top and bottom of the battery. They need to make good contact with the battery.

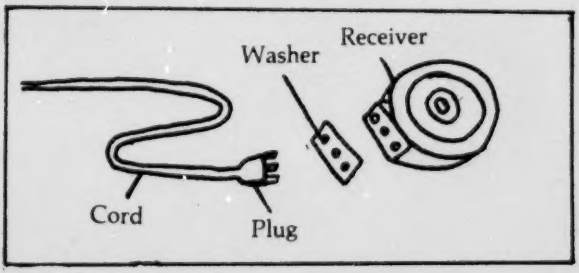
Body Hearing Aid. See if the battery contacts are dirty. If so, clean with a nail file, fine sandpaper, or an eraser. Then blow any dirt out of the aid.

The battery contacts should press tightly against the battery. If not, push very gently against them. Do this with the tip of a nail

file or a very small screwdriver. Push the contacts so they will press against the battery. Better yet, ask the person who sold the aid to do this for you.

☐ CORD

Body Hearing Aid. There should be no knots in the cord. If there is a loose knot, untie it. Do not untie a tight knot. If you do, you are likely to break the wire in the cord.



Look at the plug at each end of the cord. If it has a washer, it should be in place. If the washer is

missing, replace it. The drawing on page 18 shows a plug, washer, and receiver.

One plug of the cord should fit tightly in the case of the hearing aid. The other plug should fit tightly in the receiver. If the plugs are not tight, you may need a new cord. (When you take the cord off, pull it out by the plug, not the cord.)

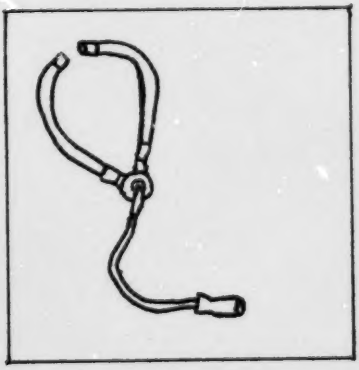
☐ RECEIVER

Body Hearing Aid. The drawing inside the back cover shows a receiver. The cord plugs into a plastic cap on the top of the receiver. See if the plastic is cracked or chipped. If so, the receiver may need to be replaced.

LISTEN TO THE HEARING AID

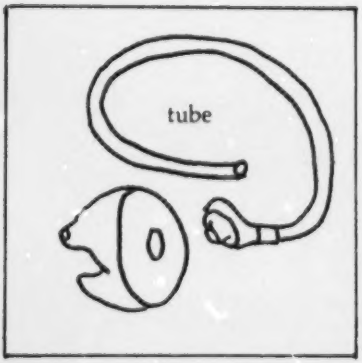
After you have looked over the hearing aid, listen to how it sounds. A good way to listen is through a hearing aid stethoscope. It has a tube that goes in each ear like a doctor's stethoscope. It can be used to check a body aid or an ear-level aid.

Another good way to listen to an aid is through an earmold. You can have a mold made to fit your



ear. Get a "standard" or "receiver" mold made from hard plastic.

If you listen to an ear-level aid, you will also need a piece of tube. Get a tube about 16 to 18 inches long (40 to 45 cm). It can be the same size as an earmold tube, or a little bigger. Get a connector that will fit into one end of the tube and snap on to the earmold.



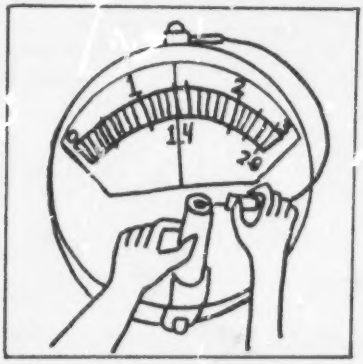
The mold for checking a body aid is drawn above. The snap-on

tube is for checking an ear-level aid.

Here are some things to do before you listen to a hearing aid.

1. Check the settings. The volume should be all the way down and the aid should be turned off. The aid should be on the correct tone setting for your child. (Ask the audiologist which tone setting if you do not know.) The aid should *not* be on the telephone or "T" setting.

2. Test the battery if you have a battery tester. The drawing shows how to use a battery tester. Some battery testers for 1.3- to 1.5-volt batteries are marked "good" and "weak." If your battery is weak, throw it away. Be sure to put a good battery in the aid.



3. Fit the aid on your stethoscope or earmold. Put the stethoscope or earmold in your ear.

Now you are ready to listen to the aid. Do these things next.

1. Turn on the aid.

2. Turn up the volume a little bit.

3. Hold the mike about ten inches (25 cm) from your mouth.

4. Speak just over the mike as you see in the drawing. Speak quietly. Say something like, "See father's shoe."

It is hard to say what your speech should sound like. It will sound a little bit like speech over the telephone.

After you listen to the aid every day, you will learn how it should sound. The sounds should be clear. The sound of the "s" in "see" and the "sh" in "shoe" should be sharp.

The sound should not be scratchy or muffled. It should not be too soft. If the aid does not sound like it should, see "Speech Not Clear" on page 43. If the aid is too soft, see "Speech Too Soft" on page 44.

5. Check the volume control. As you speak, turn it slowly up and slowly down. You can say, "See father's shoe," or count, "One, two, three, four . . . ." The aid should make your voice slowly get louder and then softer.

When you turn the volume, the sound should not cut off and on. If it does, see "Aid Goes off and on" on page 46. You should not hear static when you turn the volume.

6. **Body Hearing Aid.** Turn the volume up a little bit. Listen to

your voice while you wiggle the cord. Wiggle it near each plug. The sound of your voice should not change. You may hear a little rubbing if the cord moves against the case.

When you move the cord, the sound should not cut off and on. If it does, replace the cord. There should be no static when you wiggle the cord. If there is, replace the cord. Be sure to wiggle the new cord to check that it is all right.

7. Listen to the hearing aid. Do not talk or move the aid. You will hear a faint sound that lets you know the aid is on. The aid should make sounds around you louder.

The aid should not be making a loud hum. It should not have static or buzzing. If it does, see "Noise" on page 42.

8. Now turn the aid off. If it is working all right, it is ready to be put on your child. If it is not working right, see if you can find out what to do. Look on page 3 under PROBLEMS. Then look up the problem in the back of the booklet.

PUT ON THE HEARING AID

Check the settings before you put the hearing aid on your child. The volume wheel should be turned down and the aid should be off. The aid should be set on the right tone. It should *not* be on the "T" or telephone setting.

Body Hearing Aid. Put the aid in the harness. Make sure it can not slip out.

Behind-the-Ear Hearing Aid. Hang the aid behind the ear. Be careful not to twist the tube. If the aid does not stay in place, it may need something to hold it. Ask the person who sold the aid about tape that is sticky on both sides. An earmold wire or a headband may also help.

All Hearing Aids. Look at your child's ear. It should not be swollen. There should be no red mark on it anywhere. If his ear looks all right, put in the earmold. (Pages 4 to 8 in STEPS booklet 1 tell how to put in the earmold.)

SET THE HEARING AID

Turn the hearing aid on. Turn the volume wheel up to the right setting. If you do not know what volume to use, ask the audiologist.

TAKE OFF THE HEARING AID

When it is time to take the hearing aid off, this is how to do it.

1. Turn down the volume.
2. Turn off the aid.
3. Take off the aid.
4. Take out the battery.
5. Put the aid in a safe place.

The hearing aid should be taken off whenever there is danger of

breaking it. It should be taken off before rough play like wrestling.

The aid should also be taken off before bathing and before going to bed. A few people wear their aids while sleeping. But most people do not.

If the battery can be recharged, you may need to put it in the charger overnight. Some batteries cannot be taken out of the hearing aid. The aid itself is put in the charger.

PROBLEMS

If the hearing aid does not work right, check it yourself. At first you may want to ask your child's teacher to help you.

Some problems can be fixed easily. Other problems need a trained person to fix them. The next pages tell you what to do for these problems.

1. No Sound
2. Whistling or Feedback
3. Noise
4. Speech Not Clear
5. Speech Too Soft
6. Aid Goes off and on

When you are checking the aid, do not open the case. If you do, your warranty may no longer be good. (The warranty often says that the maker will fix any prob-

lem during the first year.)

If you can not get your aid to work right, take it for repair. Take it to the person who sold you or gave you the aid. If his service is not good, ask your child's teacher where to take the aid. Or ask someone else who has a hearing aid.

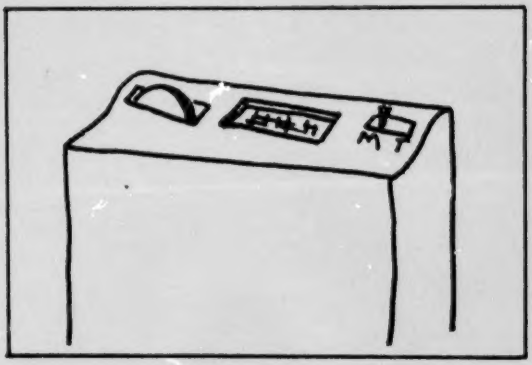
NO SOUND

These are some things to check if the hearing aid gives no sound. Check one thing after another until the hearing aid works again.

☐ TELEPHONE SWITCH

Look at the switch that is used with the telephone. It is often marked with the letters "T" for telephone and "M" for mike. If it

is on the "T" setting, change it to the "M" or mike setting.



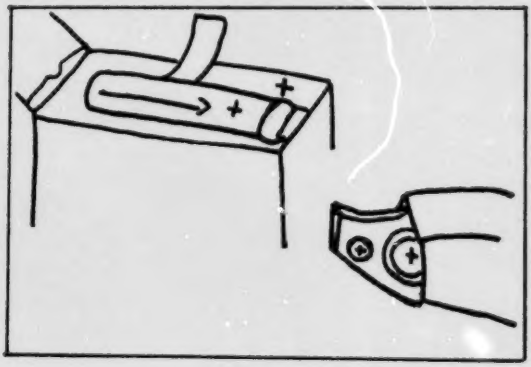
☐ ON-OFF SWITCH

Look at the switch that turns the hearing aid off and on. Make sure the aid is turned on. If you are not sure how to turn it on, look it up. Check the booklet that came with the aid. Then turn the aid on.

☐ BATTERY BACKWARDS

Make sure the battery is in the right way. Match the plus (+) on

the battery with the plus on the hearing aid. If there is no plus on the aid, try the battery one way, then turn it around. In some ear-level aids, the battery will only go in one way. *Do not force the battery in.*



☐ DIRTY BATTERY CONTACTS

Dirt on the battery or battery contacts may keep the aid from working. Make sure the top and bottom of the battery are clean. If

they are dirty, clean them with fine sandpaper or a nail file.

Body Hearing Aid. Find where the ends of the battery touch metal parts in the hearing aid. Clean the metal parts with sandpaper or a nail file.

☐ LEAKING BATTERY

Throw away an old battery if it is covered with a light-colored crust on the end. Leaking from the battery causes the crust and it may damage the aid.

☐ DEAD BATTERY

Check the battery. See pages 22 and 23 for how to check it. If it is weak or dead, put in a good battery.

If you do not have a battery tester, put in a new battery. If the aid works with the new battery, throw the old one away.

☐ WAX PLUG

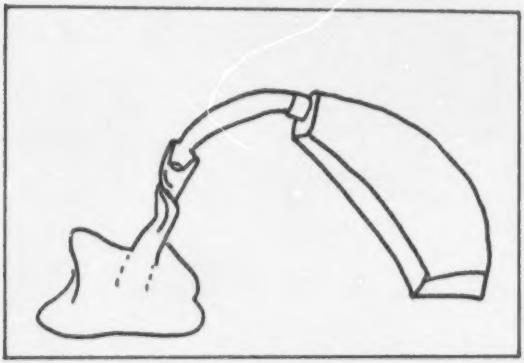
Look at the hole in the earmold. If it is plugged with wax, it may keep sound from getting through. Pages 14 and 15 tell how to get the wax out.

☐ BROKEN CORD

Body Hearing Aid. The cord may be broken. To find out, try a new cord. If the aid works with the new cord, throw away the old one. There is another way to test a cord. You could buy a cord tester.

☐ TWISTED TUBE

Ear-level Hearing Aid. The tube on the earmold should not be twisted. If it is, it may keep sound from getting through. Untwist it. If the tube is old and hard, it may be bent so the sound does not go



through. The old tube can be replaced by the person who made the earmold.

If the aid still does not work, take it to the person who sold the aid.

WHISTLING OR FEEDBACK

Sometimes the hearing aid mike picks up sound from the receiver. This makes the aid whistle. It is also called feedback or squeal.

PROBLEMS

Your child can not hear speech when the aid is making this loud sound. If whistling is a problem, look at these things.

☐ LOUD VOLUME SETTING

A loud volume setting can cause whistling. Check the volume. If it is too loud, turn it down. Do not turn it below the setting the audiologist advised. Instead, look for another way to get rid of the whistling.

☐ LOOSE EARMOLD

If the earmold does not fit tightly in the ear, the aid may whistle. A *tiny* bit of Vaseline on the mold may make it fit tighter. This may help until a new mold can be made.

Make sure the mold is in the ear the way it should go. Read STEPS

booklet 1 if you are not sure how to put the mold in.

If the mold looks too small, a new mold may be needed. If the mold falls out or pulls out very easily, a new mold may be needed. Check with the person who made the mold.

☐ MIKE TOO CLOSE

Body Hearing Aid. If the mike is too close to the receiver, the aid will whistle. Try moving the case of the aid farther away from the receiver.

If the receiver is in the left ear, the aid may have to be worn on the right side of the chest. Ask the audiologist about this.

☐ OBJECT TOO CLOSE

Something close to the hearing aid may cause whistling. If a child's head is near a wall, the aid

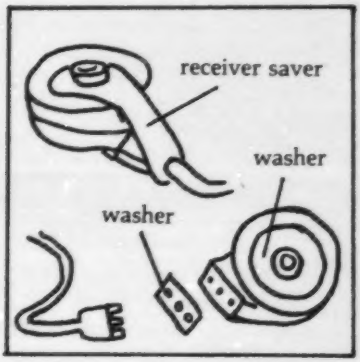
may whistle. If his arm or hand is near his ear, it may cause whistling.

☐ LOOSE RECEIVER

Body Hearing Aid. The cord should be tight in the receiver. A loose fit may be caused by a washer missing from the plug. If so, replace the missing washer.

A loose fit can also be caused by a chip out of the receiver cap. If this is the problem, the receiver will have to be replaced. See the person who sold the aid about a new receiver.

The receiver should fit tightly against the earmold. A loose fit may be caused by a washer missing from the receiver. If so, replace the washer. If the receiver still does not fit tightly, check with the person who sold the aid.



NOTE: A little piece of plastic can be used to connect the receiver and cord. It is sometimes called a "receiver saver." It is to keep from losing the receiver when the cord gets unplugged. Ask the person who sold the aid about a receiver saver.

☐ WAX PLUG

A plug of wax in the hole of the earmold may cause whistling. Take the wax out of the earmold. Pages 14 and 15 tell how to take it out.

Remember, your child should wear his aid at the volume advised

by the audiologist. Do not turn the aid too soft to get rid of the whistling. Instead, look for the problem and correct it.

If you can not get rid of the whistling, check with the audiologist. Or check with the person who sold the aid.

NOISE

There may be other noise in the aid besides whistling. You may hear a hum, buzz, or static. If you do, try these things.

☐ BATTERY

Try a new battery. If the noise goes away, throw out the old battery. Use the new one.

☐ CORD

Body Hearing Aid. Try a new

cord. If the noise goes away, throw out the old cord. Use the new one.

☐ TELEPHONE SWITCH

If the aid is on the "T" or telephone setting, you may hear a soft hum. Change the switch to the "M" or mike setting.

If none of these things gets rid of the noise, check with the person who sold the aid.

SPEECH NOT CLEAR

If speech does not sound clear, do this.

☐ BATTERY

Try a new battery. If the sound is clear again, throw away the old battery. If the sound is still not

clear, take the aid to the person who sold it.

SPEECH TOO SOFT

If the aid is not as loud as it should be, try these things.

☐ EARMOLD

See if there is wax plugging the hole in the earmold. If so, take the wax out. (Pages 14 and 15 tell how.)

Ear-level Hearing Aid. See if the tubing is twisted. If it is, untwist it.

☐ SETTINGS

Look at the tone setting if there is one. Make sure the tone setting and any other settings are at the right place.

☐ BATTERY

Test the battery. If it is weak, throw it away. Test a new battery. If it is good, put in the new battery.

If you do not have a battery tester, put in a new battery. If the aid is loud enough with the new battery, then the old one must have been weak. Throw it away and use the new one.

NOTE: Zinc air batteries are sealed to keep them fresh. After you unseal them, they need a minute to get their full power.

If the aid is still not loud enough, there is some other problem. Take the aid to the person who sold it.

AID GOES OFF AND ON

Sometimes a hearing aid goes off and on when you do not want it to. If it does, check these things.

☐ CORD

Body Hearing Aid. Unplug the cord by pulling on the plug. Rub the metal tips with sandpaper to take off any dirt. Plug the cord in again.

Turn the aid on and listen to it. At the same time wiggle the cord near one of the plugs. Then wiggle the cord near the other plug. If this makes the sound go off and on, the cord must be bad.

Put on a new cord. Wiggle it. If the sound does not go off and on, the old cord caused the problem. Throw away the old cord since it can not be fixed.

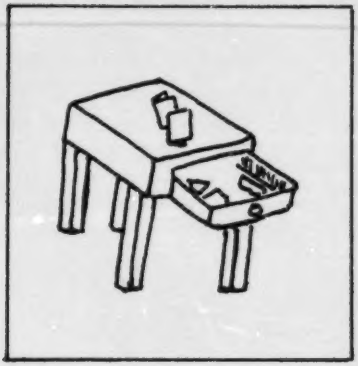
☐ VOLUME CONTROL

Move the control all the way up and down three or four times. Then turn the hearing aid on and listen to it.

Push a little bit against the volume control. Move the volume control up and down. If these things make the sound go off and on, the aid needs to be fixed. Take it to the person who sold it.

☐ CASE

Turn the hearing aid on and listen. Push against the case a little bit. Push against different places on the case. If this makes the sound go off and on, the aid needs to be fixed. Take it to the person who sold it.



THINGS YOU WILL NEED

These are some things you will need to take care of hearing aids. You may want to keep these things together in a drawer. You could keep your child's glasses in the same drawer.

Some pets like to chew hearing aids. This is why the drawer is a good place to keep the aids at night. And you could put them there any time they are not being worn.

These first things tell you what

you need to know about hearing aids.

1. This booklet—"How to Take Care of a Hearing Aid"
2. The booklet that came with the hearing aid (Write in the booklet the model number, serial number, and kind of battery.)
3. Any notes from your doctor

The next things are for taking care of hearing aids.

1. A battery tester
2. A pipe cleaner or pin
3. Silica gel and a plastic bag
4. A nail file, emery board, or typewriter eraser
5. Your earmold or a hearing aid stethescope
6. The box the hearing aid came in
7. Extra batteries
8. An extra cord (for body aid)

9. An extra receiver (for body aid)

These are some other things you may need. But you may not want to keep them in this drawer.

1. Vaseline (See pages 7 and 8 in STEPS booklet 1)
2. Mild soap (to wash earmold or glasses)
3. Ear syringe (to blow water out of the earmold after washing it)

SPECIAL HEARING AIDS

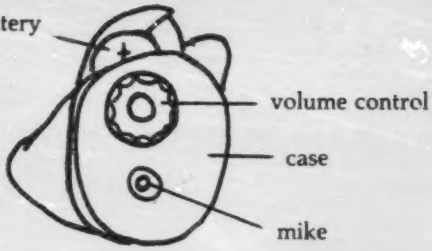
A **loop system** can be used if a child's hearing aid has a telephone setting. This system helps a child hear the teacher in any part of the room. It does not matter if he is near the teacher or across the room.

A wire loop is put around the walls of the room. But no part of the loop system touches the child's hearing aid. He can move freely any place in the room.

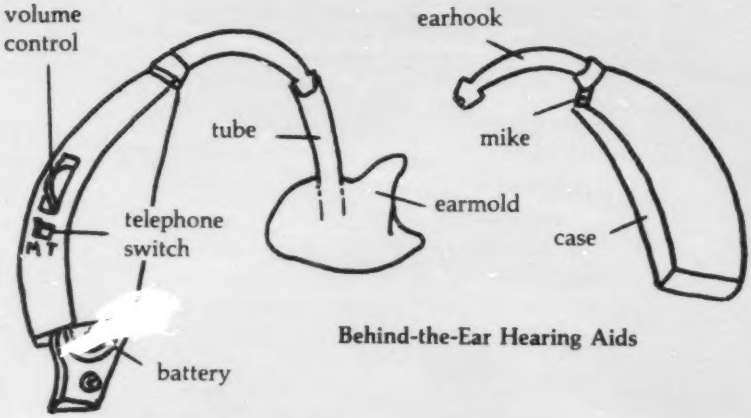
A **radio system** can be used with some hearing aids. This system has a small FM radio station. The teacher's broadcast is picked up by the child's hearing aid. The teacher's voice can be heard over 10 yards (meters) away.

Part of the radio system is worn by the teacher. The rest is worn by the child. This way the radio system can be used indoors and outdoors. It can also be used at home.

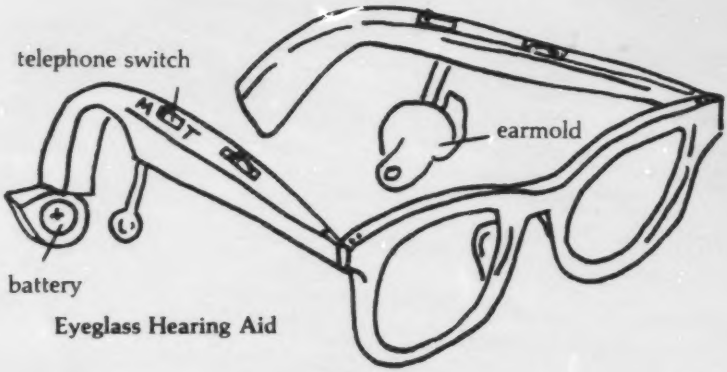
Not everyone needs one of these special hearing aids. Ask your child's audiologist and teacher if one would help.



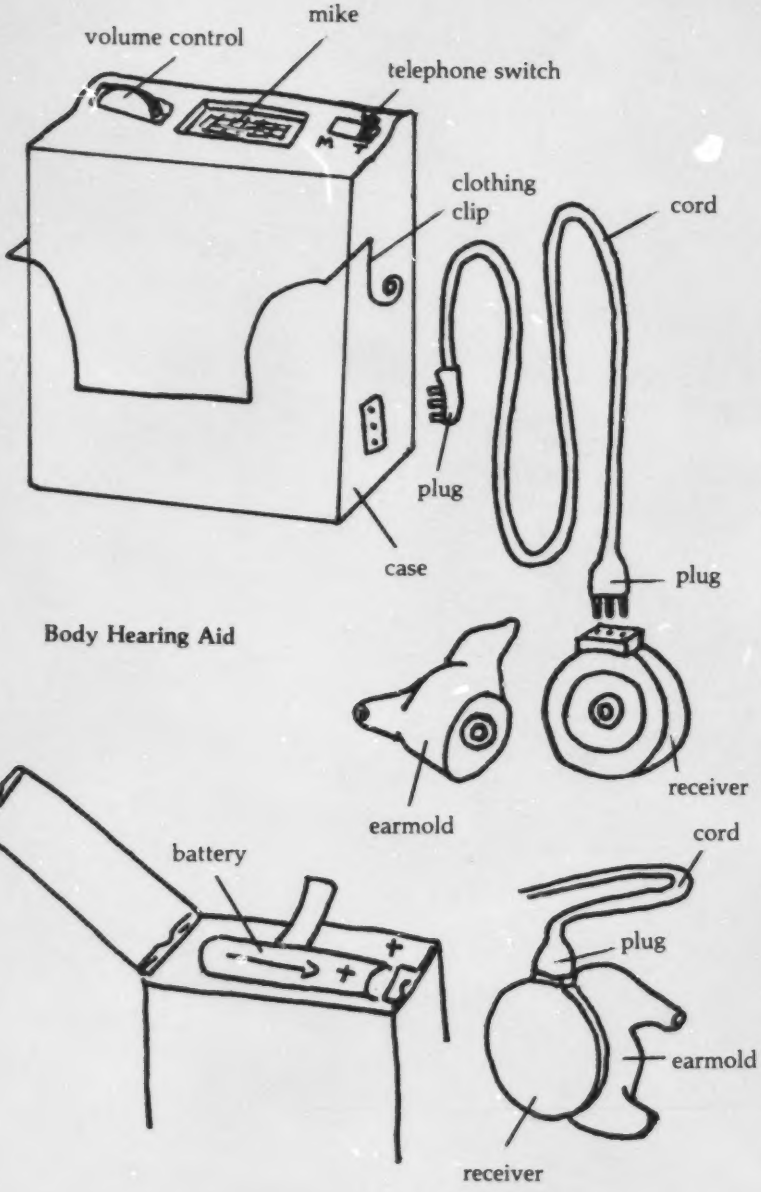
In-the-Ear Hearing Aid



Behind-the-Ear Hearing Aids



Eyeglass Hearing Aid



Body Hearing Aid

THE FIRST STEP IS THE HARDEST.

—MARIE DE VICHY-CHAMROND

☐ Additional copies of this booklet are available from

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for Deaf-Blind Children
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Talladega, AL 35160
USA